

Meeting Date: May 22, 2013

Page 1



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EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT May 22, 2013

PROGRAM UPDATE

Ecosystem Restoration

Delta Restoration Network: The next DRN meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, May 23rd, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The meeting will focus on successful models for habitat restoration planning with presentations from the SFEI Historical Ecology and Delta Landscapes project and the Fish Restoration Program Agreement effort that is responsible for achieving the 8,000 acres of habitat under the Delta Smelt Biological Opinion.

The Delta Conservancy (Conservancy) is continuing to meet with State and federal agencies and other restoration practitioners in the Delta to understand the functionality needed of a habitat restoration project tracking database. We are analyzing existing systems and comparing their functionality to the needs identified. The next project tracking meeting will be held in late May.

Channel Margin Habitat: The Conservancy is exploring opportunities for channel margin habitat enhancement. We have met with the Department of Water Resources, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service to investigate this idea. In collaboration with these agencies, a framework is being developed to guide how channel margin habitat enhancement could occur in the Delta as well as complement other Delta restoration planning efforts.

Economic Development

Delta Branding: Conservancy staff continues to work on Delta branding efforts in support of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan. We're excited to announce that the Conservancy and the Delta Protection Commission (Commission) will be working together to hire a marketing consultant to begin the branding process. Once the consultant is on board, a market analysis will be conducted to identify who's coming to the Delta, as well as the people Delta businesses want to attract to the region. The two agencies will also be scheduling public meetings to invite community participation in the branding process. While there are some definite differences between branding and the Commission's National Heritage Area (NHA) initiative, there are many complementary aspects that promote the cooperation of the two agencies. The Conservancy and the Commission plan to work inclusively and collaboratively with the community. The Conservancy is also hopeful that this cross-agency collaboration will provide the Delta with a well-thought out brand that businesses, cities, and others can use to promote themselves and the Delta as a destination.

Meeting Date: May 22, 2013**Page 2***Education and Outreach*

Delta Dialogues: Phase 2 of the Delta Dialogues is scheduled to begin on May 31, 2013. The group will continue to build upon their Phase 1 success in developing shared understanding as they address such issues as the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan, trust, governance, and how best to correct misinformation about the Delta and its issues.

Delta Waterway Cleanup: The Conservancy partnered with several Delta agencies and organizations to form the Delta Waterway Cleanup collaboration. The Delta Waterway Cleanup's objectives are to preserve, protect, and maintain the natural waterways in our communities through education and outreach. The goal is to educate the public on the aesthetic, recreational, educational, and ecological value of Delta waterways. This collaborative effort has included the development of Delta Waterway Cleanup activities with two clean-ups events: Creek Week Clean up in the spring and the Coastal Cleanup in the fall.

In celebration of the Creek Week, the Conservancy led the first Delta Waterways Cleanup on April 13th partnering with Sacramento County Regional Parks, Rio Vista Windsurfers Assn (RVWA), Sherman Island Kiteboarding Organization, California Striped Bass Assn-Isleton, Snodgrass Solutions, Delta Windsurf & Watersports, and Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed. The effort received much media attention. The Conservancy and Rio Vista Chamber were featured on KUIC radio, 93.5. Campbell Ingram was interviewed on FOX40 morning and evening news prior to the event. Additionally, the Rio Vista Herald and Isleton Journal published an article on the cleanup activities at Sherman Island. The cleanup garnered 6800 pounds of trash collected by 140 participants at 4 sites.

Conservancy staff is now working with the Delta Waterway Cleanup collaborative to organize the fall cleanup in conjunction with the Great Coastal Cleanup on September 21st.

PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Delta Carbon: Recognizing the magnitude of ongoing carbon emissions and subsidence that result from agricultural practices on the peat soils of the Delta, and the significant opportunities to reduce those emissions and sequester carbon on Delta lands through a variety of practices; the Conservancy has been working with a large partnership to develop pilot projects and inform policy that recognizes the Delta as a significant carbon opportunity area. Partners include the Coastal Conservancy, DWR, USGS, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, the American Carbon Registry, The Nature Conservancy, the Environmental Defense Fund and Hydrofocus, Inc. To date the group has been successful in getting managed wetlands and a Delta wide emissions inventory included in the Draft Cap-and-Trade Auction Proceeds Investment Plan, and we are hopeful that the legislature will commit funding in the FY 13/14 budget to the Conservancy to implement pilot projects. Additionally, the group has been working with the Air Resources Board (ARB) and potential funding partners to develop a scope of work for the development of a protocol in the near term that will meet standards for ARB adoption and use under the Cap-and-Trade compliance market. Lastly, the Conservancy submitted a \$1,000,000 grant application to the US Department of Agriculture's Conservation Innovation Grant program for additional funding to support managed wetlands pilot projects. Awards will be made in midsummer, 2013.

Meeting Date: May 22, 2013**Page 3**

Small Farms: The Conservancy convened a meeting to begin discussing how to support farmers in the Delta. This first meeting included representatives from UC Small Farms, the Center for Land-Based Learning, and Feeding Crane Farms. The group agreed that the development of a farm ombudsman (similar to what was recently started in Yolo and Solano counties) who assists farmers in navigating permits, regulations, marketing, and the other business related-aspects of farming would be most helpful. Staff is continuing the discussion with local farmers, as well as the county Agricultural Commissioners to determine the next best steps in the Conservancy's support of Delta farms.

GRANT AND FUNDING PROGRAM UPDATE

The Conservancy continues to seek grant opportunities for its ecosystem restoration, economic development, education, and outreach programs. The following grant funds have been received by the Conservancy:

1. S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation: \$150,000
2. Department of Fish and Wildlife: \$100,800

The following grant applications were recently submitted.

Farm-to-School Grant: The Conservancy applied for a USDA Farm to School grant. The request is for a planning grant to support the development of a coalition to explore a farm to school program in the River Delta Unified School District. This exploration will also consider what activities would be compatible, such as an afterschool nutrition program and school gardens. River Delta Unified School District, the California Alliance with Family Farmers, the California Food Literacy Center, and a few Delta farmers provided letters of support for the Conservancy's application. The Conservancy is asking for \$100,000 and providing a \$47,500 in-kind match.

Conservation Initiative Grant (CIG): The Conservancy partnered with The Nature Conservancy, Hydro Focus, Department of Water Resources, UC Berkeley, the Delta Wetlands Project, and American Carbon Registry to apply for a USDA CIG grant. A concept proposal entitled, "Demonstrating Environmental and Economic Benefits from Land-Use Conversion in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta's Organic Soils" was submitted and accepted. A full proposal for \$900,000 was submitted on May 13, 2013. The awards will be announced by August 1, 2013; the project is expected to begin by September 1, 2013.

The purpose of this project is to (1) create a high quality quantitative methodology for greenhouse gas benefits from land use conversion to wetlands in peat soils; and (2) demonstrate the potential for farm-scale conversion to managed wetlands to earn carbon credits while producing the environmental benefits of: (a) reduced greenhouse gas emission; (b) carbon sequestration; (c) soil accretion; (d) water quality improvements; (e) increased wildlife habitat; and (f) levee stabilization.

CONSERVANCY BUDGET UPDATE

The Conservancy is currently working with the Delta Stewardship Council and the Delta Protection Commission to coordinate FY 14/15 budget change proposal concept papers.

Meeting Date: May 22, 2013

Page 4

OUTREACH – DELTA MEETING MATRIX

An attached meeting matrix summarizes the most recent events and lists the key dates of future meetings.

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